

RD AN No. 3521 (1944-I)  
February 15, 2000

TO: State Directors, Rural Development Managers,  
and Community Development Managers

ATTN: Rural Housing Program Directors

FROM: David J. Villano (Signed by William M. Toney) for  
Deputy Administrator  
Single Family Housing

SUBJECT: Site Costs for Self-Help Housing Participants

**PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:**

The purpose of this Administrative Notice (AN) is to clarify the maximum amount a self-help housing borrower may be charged for an adequate building site/lot when the self-help housing grantee owns the lot(s). The grantee may sell the lot at or below market value to the self-help participants. The cost to the borrower for the site and improvements in place may not exceed the market value of the site.

**COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN:**

There has been no previous AN issued on this subject.

**IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:**

There have been several inquiries regarding the sale of lots to self-help participants for more than the purchase price paid by the grantee; especially in cases where there have been limited improvements to the property or when the property was donated to the grantee.

EXPIRATION DATE: September 30, 2000

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:  
Preceding RD Instruction 1944-I

The concern raised is that grantees may be using the profit generated by the sale of these properties to fund other programs within their organizations. Additionally, the self-help family, may, in some cases, need to borrow more loan funds to purchase the lot from the grantee than if the property were purchased directly from the seller. Although these issues appear on the surface to have merit, the Agency has no authority to regulate the cost of building sites. In addition, any profit generated by the sale of the properties is brought back to the community in the form of other housing related projects and community development efforts of the grantee furthering rural development. Moreover, the self-help family gains all the benefits derived from the self-help process including sweat equity, technical skill building, empowerment, and sense of community. Therefore, the self-help grantee may market, option, and sell lots at or below their market value.

In accordance with RD Instruction 1922-A, all appraisals completed for new construction under the Section 502, Single Family Housing Direct Loan program, will utilize both the cost and comparable sales approaches to establish market value. As a component of the cost approach, a lot or land value is established based on the appraiser's knowledge and data concerning the market value of similar lots. Any site improvements that are actually in place such as well, septic, water and/or sewer line connections, etc., must be considered in determining the land value. This information is reported on Marshall and Swift Form 1007, "Square Foot Appraisal Form" and Form RD 1922-8, "Uniform Residential Appraisal Report." Accordingly, the option to purchase or sales contract for the lot must not exceed the market value of the site reflected in the appraisal process. In addition, the Direct Single Family Housing Programs Field Office Handbook, HB-1-3350, paragraph 5.4, states the value of the site should not exceed 30 percent of the as-improved market value of the property. However, there are provisions under which the site value may exceed the 30 percent limitation.

If there are any questions concerning this AN please contact Carrie Schmidt at (202) 690-0510. For questions pertaining to the Self-Help Housing program, contact Norma Lopez at (202) 720-1366.